



T O R B R E C K

BAROSSA VALLEY

“

...THE LAIRD IS LIKE STARING INTO THE SUN: BRIGHT, PERFECT, FAULTLESS, HUGE, STUNNING.

ERIN LARKIN THE WINE ADVOCATE

”

99

2018 THE LAIRD

RATING: 99

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

Single-vineyard wines that are at the behest and mercy of the seasons are very exciting to view over time. You understand the essence of the style of the wine and the vineyard DNA, so you sit, patiently waiting for the vintages and seasons that meet your personal proclivities to roll around. The 2018 vintage is one of those for me, as will be the cool 2021 and 2022 seasons. The fruit is sourced from the Gnadenfrei vineyard, which was planted in 1958, in Marananga. The fruit was picked over a variety of picks at optimal ripeness and matured for 36 months in new French oak barriques by Dominique Laurent. Eminently red-fruited in the mouth, this 2018 The Laird is reflective of the 2018 season, in that it is pure, fresh, laden with blood plum, saturated in red berries and framed by savory, exotically spiced black tannins. The oak, while a prominent feature of the wine, supports the fruit at all times and assists in extending the flavor through the finish. Thick in the mouth, yet still fresh, there is a moreish quality to this wine. I love it. (It is likely unnecessary to tell you that the wine is incredibly full-bodied. It is enveloping and huge but wonderful.)



2020 RUNRIG

RATING: 97+

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz Viognier

Tasting the RunRig beside the Descendant is always a wise move, in order to gain some contextual understanding of how they are similar and, perhaps more importantly, how they differ. This 2020 RunRig was sourced from six different vineyards across Barossa (in Lyndoch, Rowland Flat, Moppa, Ebenezer, Light Pass and Greenock) and includes a 2% “dosage” (as winemaker Ian Hongell described it) of Viognier. Matured for 30 months in a combination of new French oak (50%) and second and third fill barrels, the wine rests on its lees for that time. The lower percentage of Viognier here is a seductive and effective thing, adding just enough slick and polish to make this the sybaritic wine that it is, but little enough to allow the grunt, grit and muscle of the Shiraz from all those glorious locations to shine through. Despite the very long time in oak, the wine is balanced and excellent, big in almost every possible way but with an undeniable sense of class and length of flavor. Executed with detail and precision, this wine is clearly defined in its expression of house style.

97+



2020 DESCENDANT

RATING: 96+

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz Viognier

The Descendant is a Shiraz Viognier blend, co-fermented. This year, the 2020 Descendant comprises 91% Shiraz and 9% Viognier; the vineyard is in Marananga and was planted in 1994, from cuttings from the RunRig vineyard. It matured for 20 months in second fill French oak barriques, previously used for the RunRig. In every way (price, vineyard source, cepage, maturation), this wine is a baby RunRig, although there remain some stylistic differences in the mouth. For one thing, this 2020 Descendant has been matured (as mentioned) in older oak, so the imprint of oak flavors is more subtle. While there is no denying that the texture has an extreme slick and polish (it is almost thick in the mouth, truly plush) from the high percentage of Viognier, the wine is pure and glossy and exuberantly fruit driven. The tannins, which exist very much within the wine, are savory and exotically spiced: star anise, clove, hints of cardamom, licorice, red dirt and iodine. This is very good, luxurious, enveloping, sybaritic, with lots going on.

96+



96+



2021 THE GASK

RATING: 96+

FROM: Eden Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

The 2021 The Gask is 100% Shiraz from the Eden Valley. The wine itself is brooding and black, with blue fruits and a muscularity in the mouth. It has length of flavor and line, and the tannins that infuse the fruit are intense and savory. There are notes of black tea, resin, chewing tobacco, black pepper, blackberry and cassis. This is a ripping wine. It is elegant and full-bodied at once—svelte, huge, awesome.

2021 HILLSIDE VINEYARD GRENACHE

RATING: 95

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache

“How was 2021 for you, was it as good as I’ve heard?” I asked winemaker Ian Hongell. “I initially held my powder. But once the wines resolved in barrel, and they came out the other side, I knew they were pretty good. They weren’t as obvious. There’s a brightness to the 2021s; they’re seamless, and there’s lifted freshness,” said Hongell. The fruit for this 2021 Hillside Vineyard Grenache is from the Hillside vineyard, planted 1949, in Lyndoch. It matured for 18 months in large form (2,400 liters) French oak foudre. This is very good. There is a core of sweet red fruit at the very heart of this wine, but it is wrapped in a casing of very fine, savory tannins. The alcohol is 15%, but it in no way minimizes the freshness of the fruit, and the cool season is evident in the outlay of flavor across the palate. To repeat, this is very good.



2020 THE FACTOR

RATING: 96

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

The 2020 The Factor is 100% Shiraz and made up of fruit from Gomersal, Krondorf, Marananga and Ebenezer in the Barossa Valley. The wine was matured for 24 months in a combination of new (40%) and seasoned French oak barriques. In the glass, the wine verges on black, and the nose echoes this abyss-like shade. Blackberry, blood plum, black cherry, licorice, campfire embers, cocoa dust, clove, iodine, vanilla pod and red dirt—this is the core of the wine, the beating heart. The tannins, like a skeleton that protects it, are velvety, plush and structural. Like a skeleton, the tannins are entrenched in the fruit, concealed by a skin of flavor. This is a sybaritic, superstar wine that reflects the warm, concentrated, dry, low-yielding vintage from whence it came. This is classic, polished, midnight Torbreck here.

2020 THE PICT

RATING: 95

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Mataro

The 2020 The Pict Mataro is savory, dense and plush, but it has always been thus. There are notes of mulberry, blackberry, freshly turned earth, singed eucalypt/campfire, some chewing tobacco and licorice. This is excellent, a serious, fresh, big, exciting Mataro, a benchmark from my early drinking days and stylistically very clear and sure of itself.

96



96

2021 THE STRUIE

RATING: 96

FROM: Barossa, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

The 2021 The Struie is 100% Shiraz from both the Barossa (57%) and the Eden Valley (43%), and it matured for 18 months in French oak (20% new). The proportion of Eden Valley inclusion is usually around 25%, but in 2019, it was down to 10% due to the very low yields. So, this 2021 Struie is blue-fruited on the nose, with blueberry, licorice, black tea, crushed rocks, summer raspberry, layers of campfire embers and clove. It might be that in many of the tasting notes from 2021, that the wines outperform previous vintages. This is because the cool season was long, so great ripeness was achieved, without the stress or impact of heat events and disease. It’s a lovely, lovely year that has made wines with freshness and intensity. The tannins through the finish here are savory and fine and black.

2020 LES AMIS

RATING: 95

FROM: Barossa Valley

South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache

The fruit for the Les Amis Grenache is from the Slade vineyard, planted in the 1960s. The wine was matured for 24 months in French barriques (40% new). The 2020 Les Amis Grenache is savory, resinous, structural and firm. The core of red fruit remains protected, but it is clear that there is a long future for this wine that is obvious from now, and it will only evolve over time. Clove bud through the finish leaves a cooling, mineral feel in the mouth. This is very big, but very good. It is polished, and the tannins have a gritty chew to them, which is very attractive.



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95



2021 THE STEADING

RATING: 95

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache, Shiraz, Mataro

The 2021 The Steading is incredibly sweet on the nose: summer raspberries, blood plums, black cherry, licorice, star anise, some cardamom and chewing tobacco. This offers insane value for money, at around \$40AUD, but then, I feel like it has been that price for at least a decade, so it has been an insane value for a long time. This is reliable, delicious, complex, plush/generous and, through the lens of this lovely cool vintage, a superstar. The best yet.

2022 CUVÉE JUVENILES

RATING: 91

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache Mourvèdre Shiraz

Grenache (45%), Mataro (36%), Carignan (17%) and the balance Cunoise, the 2022 Cuvée Juveniles is made utilizing a number of different fermentation and maturation vessels in order to allow the fruit to speak clearly, without the encumbrance of obvious oak characters. On the nose, there is brooding black plum, blueberry, blackberry, cherry, licorice, cassis and bramble. This is fresh and precise, a really beautiful wine. The spool of flavor through the finish draws out to a long close. This is supple and good, with graphite.

93



2022 THE STEADING BLANC

RATING: 93

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Roussanne Marsanne Viognier

Like the Cuvée Juvenile Blanc, this 2022 The Steading Blanc is Roussanne-led (50%), followed by Marsanne (43%) and Viognier (7%). While the Roussanne went straight to tank (i.e., no oak), the Marsanne and Viognier were fermented and matured in seasoned French oak. That is undoubtedly what brings the softness to the middle palate, while the Roussanne contributes white flowers and chalk to the perimeters. There is also green apple (skin), loquat, lychee, white plum and nashi pear. This is lovely, complex, plush and laden with white pepper through the finish. The phenolics have a firmness to them—very attractive in a white wine.

2022 CUVÉE JUVENILES BLANC

RATING: 90

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache Mataro Cunoise Carignan

Like the Cuvée Juvenile Blanc, this 2022 The Steading Blanc is Roussanne-led (50%), followed by Marsanne (43%) and Viognier (7%). While the Roussanne went straight to tank (i.e., no oak), the Marsanne and Viognier were fermented and matured in seasoned French oak. That is undoubtedly what brings the softness to the middle palate, while the Roussanne contributes white flowers and chalk to the perimeters. There is also green apple (skin), loquat, lychee, white plum and nashi pear. This is lovely, complex, plush and laden with white pepper through the finish. The phenolics have a firmness to them—very attractive in a white wine.

2022 WOODCUTTER'S SEMILLON

RATING: 93

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Semillon

The 2022 Woodcutter's Semillon is from two vineyards; the Schulz vineyard (Ebenezer) and Philippou vineyard (Rowland Flat), and the two patches in this latter vineyard are picked independently. (The "old" part was planted 1893, and the "young" in 1900. These are "full Madeira clones," says Ian Hongell, meaning they're purple/red berries—the variety has the ability to switch from green to red at veraison.) Both are sand vineyards, picked and fermented separately. 2022 was a beautiful cool season in the Barossa, and this wine here is aromatically fresh and tight. In the mouth, the wine is salty and textural—from part (40%) of the blend being matured in seasoned barriques; "texture without a phenolic fingerprint." This has salted yellow grapefruit, lemon peel, hints of saffron, layers of green apple and a hint of spring florals. It is really good, engaging, delicious.

2022 VIOGNIER

RATING: 90

FROM: Eden Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Viognier

Tiny quantities here: like in the vicinity of 100 cases. The nose and the palate are utterly aligned in this 2022 Viognier from Eden Valley: apricots (actually, apricot marmalade), stewed green apple, white spring blossoms, strawberry and loquat/lychee/brioche... It's hard to determine this final character, but it is like an apricot danish (fresh apricots, custard, vanilla pod, pastry). That's it. Very good. Precisely.

2022 WOODCUTTER'S ROSE

RATING: 90

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Mataro

The 2022 Woodcutter's Rose is (and always has been) 100% Mataro. The Saignee used to be a bigger, richer, riper iteration of this same wine. Now the fruit is picked earlier, across three picks at different ripeness levels. The fruit is then whole-bunch chilled overnight, bag pressed and split into two batches (50/50). The first is a clear ferment (in stainless), and the second is 100% full solid barrel ferment—wild ferment. These two batches are kept separate until blending. In the glass, the wine is a flamingo feather pink, with a savory nose of pomegranate, sumac strawberries, plum skin and clove buds. Through the finish, there is saffron and even a dusting of turmeric/white pepper that keeps things completely in a savory space. Very good. Big.



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